



“Voting is Cool!” **Curriculum for Fifth and Sixth Graders:**

Materials:

- Paper ballots
- “Junior Voter” registration forms
- “Voting is Cool!” student voter registration cards
- “Steps to Voting” handout
- “Vote for Me!” campaign handout
- “Voting is Cool!” word search
- “One Vote Made a Difference”
- “Voting is Cool!” trivia handout
- Letter to parents

These items are also recommended:

- Overhead projector and transparencies if you choose to make them from materials above
- Bag or box in which students will deposit their voted ballots

The following supplies may be available through your County Auditor or Elections Department:

- “I Voted!” stickers
- “Voting is Cool!” stickers
- Voting booths or desktop voting machines
- Ballot bags
- Actual ballots used in real elections (these are often called “Demonstrator Ballots”)
- “Voting is Cool!” stickers
- Washington State Voter Registration Application Forms
- A sample voter registration card from the county in which your school is located

The following supplies are available through the Office of the Secretary of State. Please call (360) 902-4151 or download the order form at www.secstate.wa.gov/votingiscool

Curriculum

The “Voting is Cool!” curriculum has five goals with corresponding learning objectives for each. The lesson plans are flexible. They can be used in one class session or several, depending on the educator’s preference.

Goal #1:

Inspire students to vote. Explain the importance and relevance of voting.

Objectives:

- Students will be able to accurately explain the general concept of voting. - Part One
- Students will actively participate in a class discussion on the importance of voting. - Part Two
- Students will recognize voting is a privilege. They will clearly understand many other governments do not use voting as a means of choosing their leaders. - Part Two

Materials:

- Paper ballot - Part One
- Overhead with transparency or black/white board to write down student ideas as they participate in discussion. - Parts One & Two

Part One Vocabulary:

Ballot - written or printed piece of paper used to cast a vote.

Voting - the process used to choose who wins an election— or which law will be passed.

Election - the act of choosing or picking a person or thing.

Part Two Vocabulary:

Candidate - a person who seeks election to an office

Part One Instructions:

1. Hold up a paper ballot.
2. Ask students if they recognize what is in front of them.
3. Let students make several guesses.
4. Explain that it is a ballot: a written or printed piece of paper used to cast a vote.
5. Ask them if they know what voting is; explain that it is the process used to choose who will win an election. Explain what an election is (the act of choosing or picking a person or thing).
6. Explain that when people vote, they elect their leaders or determine the laws that govern them.
7. Discuss the different types of issues or candidates that make up a ballot (initiatives, elective office, federal, state, and local issues, library bonds, school levies, etc.).

Part Two Instructions:

1. Ask students if they've watched their parents vote or if they've voted themselves. For example, ask if they've voted for mascots at county fairs or on uniforms for their Boy Scout or Girl Scout troop.
 2. Define the term candidate as a person running for office.
 3. Discuss the reasons people vote, such as civic responsibility, to have a voice in their community and personal interest.
 4. Ask them if they plan on voting when they turn 18 years old. Why or why not?
 5. Explain to your group that voting is one of our most important rights in this country. Explain that in many countries, people do not have the right to elect their leaders.
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Goal #2:

Teach the concept of "running for office" and campaigning.

Objectives:

- Students will understand what motivates a candidate to run for office.
- Students will be able to clearly define campaigning.
- Students will be able to create a campaign sign and slogan.
- Students will "campaign" by presenting their signs and slogans to their classmates.

Materials Needed:

- "Vote for Me!" campaign sign worksheets
- Paper ballots

Vocabulary:

Campaigning - spreading a message to convince voters to elect a candidate or support an issue.

Campaign Sign - used by candidates or supporters of a particular issue. A sign advertises people or issues in an effort to solicit voter support.

Slogan - a phrase that spreads a message in a concise manner.

Instructions:

1. Ask students why they think people run for office.
 2. Ask students how they would get their own messages out if they were running for office.
 3. Have your class brainstorm campaign ideas and write them down on your overhead projector or your black/white board.
 4. Ask students what they have observed candidates doing to get elected (i.e. campaign promises, newspaper ads, and signs). Keep in mind, you are waiting for a student to mention "campaign sign". Point out when students see campaign signs on the side of the road, an election is near. The candidates are campaigning—or spreading a message to convince voters to elect a candidate or support an issue.
 5. Tell your students they are getting the chance to campaign for their favorite sport or fast food.
 6. Encourage them to make up a slogan for the sport or fast food they like best.
 7. Define slogan, a phrase that spreads a message in a concise manner.
 8. Distribute the "Vote for Me!" campaign handouts and have the students create their own campaign sign and slogan.
 9. Give them five to ten minutes to finish the project. (This is a good assignment for groups.)
 10. Have volunteers share their signs and slogans with classmates.
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Goal #3:

Teach students the voting process.

Part One: Teach students the steps leading up to voting.

Part Two: Teach students how to go to a pollsite and cast a ballot.

Objectives:

- Students will register to vote as a junior voter. - Part One
- Students will receive Junior Voter Registration cards and understand their purpose. - Part One
- Students will be able to recognize a ballot and know how to use it to cast a vote. - Part Two
- Students will understand the term “write-in” vote. They’ll know exactly how to write-in a candidate’s name on a ballot. - Part Two
- Students will be able to cast votes on a paper ballot. - Part Two
- Students will discuss and grasp the importance of the “secret ballot.” - Part Two

Materials:

- Junior Voter Registration forms - Part One
- Junior Voter Registration cards - Part One
- Voter Registration card - Part One
- Voter Registration form - Part One
- Paper ballots - Part Two
- Ballot bag/box - Part Two
- “I Voted!” stickers (if available) - Part Two
- “Steps to Voting” handout - Part Two

Part One Vocabulary:

Registration card - a voter identification card mailed to a citizen once that person has registered to vote. This card has important election information such as voting locations and lists of districts in which the voter is eligible to vote.

Part Two Vocabulary:

Pollsite - where voters go to vote; examples include churches, schools, and halls.

Pollbook - a book that lists the names of registered voters.

Write-in - a vote cast for a person not printed on the ballot (write-ins cannot be done for issues).

Secret ballot – manner of casting a ballot in which all votes are cast individually and privately

Part One Instructions:

1. Ask your students if they know how old they must be to vote. (The legal age is 18.)
2. Find out if any of the students knows how to register to vote.
3. Ask them if they have ever seen a voter registration application form.
4. Show them what a voter registration application form looks like.

5. Explain to them that when they are 18 years old, they can register to vote by filling out a voter registration form and mailing it to the Office of the Secretary of State or to their County Auditor or Elections Department.
6. Let the class know anyone who is a United States citizen and at least 18 years old can vote.
7. Tell students they will have the chance to vote today, but first they must fill out a Junior Voter Registration form. This form is similar to the form they will fill out when they turn 18 and want to vote.
8. Hand out the Junior Voter Registration forms and have the students fill them out.
9. Compare and contrast some items that are on the Junior Voter Registration form with the authentic Washington State Voter Registration form.
10. Tell them when they are 18 years old and they have filled out and mailed a voter registration application form, they will receive a voter registration card.
11. Once the Junior Voter Registration forms are filled out, hand out the Junior Voter Registration cards. Have students fill out and sign the cards. Explain that a real voter registration card shows a person is a registered voter and includes important election information.
12. Explain that each voter has his or her own voter registration number. The number is unique and used to make sure that each person is actually registered.
13. Show the class your real registration card.

Part Two Instructions:

1. Inform students that they will have the opportunity to participate in the voting process just like their parents. Let them know what kind of ballot they will be using. Show the ballot to your class.
2. Explain that some students will want to vote on an item other than the choices listed on the ballot.
3. Explain to them that this sometimes happens when their parents vote too.
4. There is a way to vote for someone not listed on the ballot. This could be an opportunity, time permitting, for students to brainstorm a solution to this problem before the teacher provides it.
5. When a person wants to vote for someone not listed on the ballot, the voter may “write in” his/her choice. This is what’s known as a write-in vote. Write-in votes cannot be cast for issues and initiatives. However, they can be done in the students’ voting exercise.
6. In order for a write-in vote to be counted, the person must write the choice on the ballot.
7. Remind students that voters who write in their choices cannot choose another candidate from the same contest. Point out that if voters select two choices, neither will count.
8. Explain to them that this is how their parents’ ballots are also treated.
9. Tell students they need to be very quiet when they vote because it should be a secret ballot. Each person must vote by him/herself. *(It is okay for the teacher to help a child get his or her ballot into the machine if voting machines are used, but the teacher should not watch how the child votes.)*
10. Explain to the students that they will be voting today just like their parents do on election day—this means that voting must be done in secret. Friends cannot

- watch them vote, but after everyone has voted, it's okay to tell their friends how they have voted, *if they wish*.
11. Next, explain to students their classroom is now officially a pollsite. This means they can no longer campaign inside the classroom.
 12. Point out this same rule applies to their parents when they vote.
 13. At this point the students will be ready to vote. Pass out paper ballots. They will be voting on their favorite sport (basketball, soccer, volleyball, baseball/softball, football), ice cream flavor (chocolate, strawberry, cookies-n-cream, or vanilla), animal (dog, cat, hamster, or fish), and their favorite food (hamburgers, pizza, tacos, or hot dogs). It is IMPORTANT to remind students that voting is SECRET.
 14. Place ballot box/bag in classroom and show students where it is located. Instruct students to place ballots in ballot bag or box after they have voted. Finally, hand each student an "I Voted!" sticker once he/she has placed the ballot in the bag/box.
 15. Pass out the "Steps to Voting" handout while students are casting votes. Instruct them to begin working on this worksheet while they wait for their classmates to finish voting.
 16. Once all ballots have been cast, have the class review the lesson by going over the "Steps to Voting" worksheet (see instructions below).
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Worksheet Instructions/Answer Key:

1. Ask students which of the steps on the worksheet should come first.
 2. Explain that Step One is "Turning 18 Years Old." Have them mark a 1 in that box.
 3. Then, ask them which step is second. Explain that Step Two is "Filling out a voter registration application form." Have them mark a 2 in that box.
 4. Next, ask the students what happened after they registered to vote in class. Tell them the third step is "Getting a voter registration card." Tell them to mark a 3 in that box.
 5. Next, ask them where their parents go when they vote. (There may be various answers: churches, schools, halls, etc.) Explain that where you vote is called a pollsite. Going to the pollsite is marked step 4. Inform the students that many people choose to vote by mail and do not go to a polling place, but mail their ballots instead.
 6. Tell them at the pollsite, they must sign the pollbook --a book that lists the names of the registered voters in it (point out that this step was not done in class, but is done at the pollsite). Remind students that it is important to be registered so their names will appear in the pollbooks. Tell them that signing the pollbook is important because it allows a voter to have only one vote. Mark a 5 in that box. You may want to explain to students that voters sign an oath, in the pollbooks and on their mail-in ballots that states they are being truthful.
 7. Tell them after they have signed the pollbook, they will be handed their ballot. Mark a 6 in that box.
 8. Ask the students which step comes next. Take your ballot to the voting booth and vote. Mark a 7 in that box.
 9. You get a sticker that says "I Voted!" (if available). When you have finished voting. Mark an 8 in that box. This activity could also be done in the middle of the activity, completing half of the worksheet for a review and then completing the other half at the very end of the lesson for another review.
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Goal #4:

Teach how one vote makes a difference.

Objectives:

- Students will tally votes to determine election results.
- Students will discuss how each vote had an impact on the election (focusing on close races).
- Students will learn how one vote has made a difference in history.

Materials Needed:

- Ballots cast by the class
- “One Vote Made a Difference” handout
- “Voting is Cool!” word search

Instructions:

1. Discuss the importance of one vote per person. One vote per person keeps elections fair by giving every person an equal say.
 2. Have the students guess which sport, animal, and food they think won the election.
 3. Let them know that it is their responsibility as good citizens to vote once they turn 18 years old. Remind them each of their votes counted in the classroom election, and that every vote counts in real life, too.
 4. Review the “One Vote Made a Difference” handout with class OR distribute handout to class and instruct students to read it while you count their ballots.
 5. Pass out the “Voting is Cool!” word search and let the class complete it while you count the ballots. Once you have finished, you’re ready to go on to the next segment.
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Goal #5:

Teach students how they can make a difference in our democracy.

Objectives:

- Students will understand why voting is “secret.”
- Students will be able to review what they have learned regarding voting.
- Students will brainstorm different ways to participate in democracy, emphasizing how they can be actively involved before they turn 18.
- Students will understand that they can register and vote when they turn 18 years old.
- Students will be motivated to discuss voting with their parents/guardians.
- Students will receive a letter for their parents from the County Auditor or Elections Department and the Secretary of State explaining this curriculum and why it’s important.

Materials Needed:

- Tallied results of class ballots
- “Voting is Cool!” trivia worksheet

- Letter for parents
- “Voting is Cool!” stickers

Instructions:

1. Ask the students why voting is important.
2. Ask them if they think voting is easy.
3. Ask them why they think voting is kept secret. Explain that voting is secret so people will participate in elections without worrying they might make someone angry or hurt. Citizens could get upset if voters didn’t choose the people and issues they feel strongly about.
4. Ask students if they liked the option of the “write-in” vote. Remind them of how easy and fun it is to have the chance to voice their opinions by voting. Encourage them to ask their parents to take them along to the pollsite the next time they vote.
5. Announce the election results. You may even want to write the results on the black/white board or overhead.
6. Let the class discuss whether their campaigning had any impact on the outcome of the election. Remind them they can discuss this without revealing how they voted if they want to keep their voting secret.
7. Pass out the “Voting is Cool!” trivia handout to the group for further review. You can do it together, have them fill it out while you clean up, or students can finish the assignment at home.
8. Once they are finished, go over the answers.
9. Ask students to think of ways they can make a difference, even though they are too young to vote (i.e. they can hold fundraisers like car washes and bake sales to earn money for important causes.) Tell them to remind their parents and other family members to vote and to make sure their family members are registered to vote.
10. Encourage students to talk with their parents about voting when they get home. Give them the “Letter to Parents” to take home to explain the lessons.
11. Pass out “Voting is Cool!” stickers. (If you have not done so already.)
12. Remind students they can register to vote when they turn 18 years old.

Side note:

The curriculum in Goal #5 could be used in an integrated lesson plan with math by discussing the results of the voting in context with the math lesson for the day (i.e. computer percentages of votes received, etc.).

Reference Materials online for more curriculum ideas:

www.youthvote2000.org

www.closeup.org

www.youthvote.net

www.civicmind.com

www.stateofthevote.org

www.civiced.org